



Date: September 10, 2024

Incident Synopsis:

Complaints were received regarding unlicensed raffles being conducted by the Flying L Ranch and specifically Michael LARES. The complainants detailed raffles being conducted that offered an opportunity to attend the guest ranch. Screenshots of raffle activity as well as PayPal information and other supporting information was provided.

Suspect information:

Michael LARES/FLYING L Ranch
250-302-2989
michael@flyinglranch.ca
[The love of horses & nature | Instagram, Facebook | Linktree](#)
[FLYING L RANCH - Off-Grid Horse Ranch in Nemaiah Valley B.C.](#)

Gaming Enforcement Action:

2024-08-06 SPC BOHANAN was made aware of the file through an email chain and assigned the investigation to himself.

SPC BOHANAN reviewed all the complaint details and learned the following:

A complaint from **s. 22** regarding the unlicensed raffle was entered into the GOS complaint que on July 04, 2024. The email complaint outlined concerns of an illegal raffle conducted at the Flying L Ranch by the operator Michael LARES. The detailed complaint contained screenshots and extensive details about the raffles. The complaint was unassigned in the Northern Que due to backlog on social media complaints.

A second complaint email was received from **s. 22** August 2nd. The email was sent to Executive Director Cary SKRINE but was forwarded to acting Executive Director Ed HIPSZ in his absence. Mr. HIPSZ forwarded the email to the Prince George Investigators on August 2nd. SPC BOHANAN responded to the email on August 6th following an absence during the long weekend and assigned the file to himself.

SPC BOHANAN reviewed the email complaint details from **s. 22** and conducted an open-source search on Flying L Ranch and Michael LARES and the results were as follows:

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SPC BOHANAN confirmed the presence of illegal raffle activity conducted on the Flying L Ranch social media page and website that matched the screenshots and details outlined by the complainant. SPC BOHANAN obtained several screenshots and contact information for Mr. LARES who appears to be the sole operator of the Ranch and all raffle activity.

SPC BOHANAN made s. 22 complaint INV138869 the master file due to its detailed nature and open communication by the complainant as other complaints had very limited details and/or limited contact information. All other complaints were merged in GOS by the ERO at the request of SPC BOHANAN.

2024-08-07 SPC BOHANAN contacted Mr. LARES via email requesting a phone call and advising him the Gaming Policy and Enforcement Branch (GPEB) had received several complaints regarding his raffle activity. **(All email correspondence attached to GOS file)**

Mr. LARES responded to the email via phone call to SPC BOHANAN. Mr. LARES introduced himself and went into detail about his life and the ranch. He did not hesitate to state he was conducting the raffles and was unaware they required a license to do so. SPC BOHANAN advised him of the process to obtain proper gaming event licenses and directed him to the GPEB website.

SPC BOHANAN advised Mr. LARES he would be sending a written warning following the conversation and encouraged Mr. LARES to delete and cease all unlicensed raffle activity. Mr. LARES stated he wished to fully comply with the Gaming Policy Enforcement Branch as he hoped to one day obtain charitable status for the ranch. Mr. LARES went one step further and stated he will post his GPEB interaction on his social media acknowledging he was conducting raffles without a license and offering refunds to anyone that wished to receive one. He asked if people wished to leave their money with the ranch as a donation in leu of a refund would that be acceptable. SPC BOHANAN advised him to first offer a refund, but if people wished to donate or not receive a refund that was their choice.

NOTE: s. 22

The call with Mr. LARES lasted 31 minutes

SPC BOHANAN contacted the complainant s. 22 and thanked him for the comprehensive complaint details and screenshots and assured him the Gaming Enforcement Branch would review all details and respond accordingly.

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2024-08-08 SPC BOHANAN drafted a warning letter and sent it to Mr. LARES outlining the illegal raffle activities and consequences for continuing. The warning letter also directed him to the appropriate avenues to obtain licenses in the future if he wished to do so. (Warning letter attached to GOS master File)

2024-08-12 Mr. LARES acknowledged receipt of the warning letter via email and stated he had posted on his social media advising his followers the raffle was unlicensed offering refunds to anyone who participated. He explained to date none of the participants had requested a refund, but that it was received poorly by his detractors, and it garnished hostile communications from them. Mr. LARES stated he has opened communication with his legal counsel with respect to the matter. SPC BOHANAN confirmed the post through an open-source search.

2024-08-12 SPC BOHANAN received an email from [s. 22](#) stating he had seen the social media post by Mr. LARES acknowledging the Gaming Enforcement action, but stated he had many concerns about the course of action. He attached a 10-page email attachment that included seven (7) recommendations on how GPEB could pursue the matter and direct Mr. LARES to run his social media and web pages.

SPC BOHANAN responded to the complainant thanking him for the further information and advising him several of his recommendations are beyond the scope of authority of the Gaming Enforcement Branch. SPC BOHANAN advised [s. 22](#) he could not provide him with further information as it was an ongoing investigation. [s. 22](#)

[s. 22](#) requested information on how to obtain the results of a GPEB investigation.

2024-08-13 SPC BOHANAN received a phone call from a Peter VAN DER HEYDEN claiming he was the main owner of the Flying L Ranch [s. 22](#)

[s. 22](#). SPC BOHANAN advised Mr. VAN DER HEYDEN he could not share complaint information over the phone without confirmation of who he was speaking with. Mr. VAN DER HEYDEN offered to email proof of identification and ownership to SPC BOHANAN. An email was sent to requesting the information.

2024-08-14 Mr. VAN DER HEYDEN responded and provided the following documents to SPC BOHANAN:

- Flying "L" Ranch Ltd. Incorporation Agreement and Articles
- Flying "L" Ranch Ltd. Notice of Articles
- Copy of my passport
- Title to District Lot 383 (showing the land is owned by Flying "L" Ranch Ltd.)

[s. 22](#)

[s. 3](#)

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s. 22

2024-08-15 SPC BOHANAN attempted to contact Cst. EDWARDS, but was advised he was on leave until August 22nd.

2024-08-15 SPC BOHANAN emailed Mr. VAN DER HEYDEN and advised him Mr. LARES was being cooperative and wishes to comply with any requests in the matter and that there was a delay in speaking with the investigating officer with the RCMP as he was currently on leave. SPC BOHANAN assured Mr. VAN DER HEYDEN that he was at no liability for the raffles conducted as he was not participating in the illegal activity and that Mr. LARES had accepted full responsibility for conducting the raffles and ensured they would not take place anymore

2024-08-15 SPC BOHANAN emailed Mr. LARES advising him that Cst. EDWARDS was currently on leave and was unavailable to discuss the file until near the end of the month. Mr. LARES responded and advised SPC BOHANAN he had cc'd his legal counsel at their recommendation for all future correspondence.

2024-08-20 Mr. VAN DER HEYDEN emailed SPC BOHANAN thanking him for the update and requested a copy of the written warning provided to Flying L ranch.

2024-08-21 SPC BOHANAN emailed a copy of the written warning to Mr. VAN DER HEYDEN.

2024-09-03 SPC BOHANAN attempted to contact Cst. EDWARDS and left a voicemail requesting a call back.

2024-09-06 SPC BOHANAN contacted s. 16

2024-09-06 Mr. LARES reached out to SPC BOHANAN for an update on the file following the delay in communication between BOHANAN and Cst. EDWARDS due to annual leave by both parties. Mr. LARES was advised the file was being concluded after the conversation and thanked him for his cooperation throughout. SPC BOHANAN encouraged Mr. LARES to access the GPEB website if you wished to conduct any fundraising and ensure it aligns with our provincial legislation.

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Conclusion:

SPC BOHANAN reviewed all aspects of the complaint including the extensive information provided by *s. 22* Open-source investigations confirmed the presence of unlicensed raffles conducted by Mr. LARES on behalf of the Flying L Ranch.

When contacted by SPC BOHANAN Mr. LARES was honest and forthright openly admitting he was fundraising for the ranch. When advised the activity observed during the investigation was illegal Mr. LARES was immediately responsive and cooperative. He ceased all activity and posted on the social media pages he operates that the activity was unlicensed and offered refunds to participants.

When a refund was offered through the Flying L Ranch social media page only one participant requested their money back. Any subsequent search of the Flying L Ranch social media pages following the warning letter show no signs of unlicensed raffle activity.

S/Cst. Chad BOHANAN

SUPERVISOR COMMENT:

NOTE:

- *s. 22*
- The COM *s. 22* expressed to S/Cst Bohanan that he was unsatisfied with a warning letter and wanted further action.

Based on the above notes, S/Cst Parks reviewed the file and confirmed the following:

- The GPEB investigation was limited to illegal gambling allegations as per GPEB's mandate.
- The choice of S/Cst Bohanan to issue a written warning was appropriate and in line with GPEB's response to similar events.

Tony Parks
Regional Director, Enforcement Division
Interior Region, Gaming Policy & Enforcement Branch

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